DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 384 CG 029 965

AUTHOR	Falik, Louis H.
TITLE	Using Mediated Learning Experience Parameters To Change Children's Behavior: Techniques for Parents and Childcare Providers.
PUB DATE	1988-12-00
NOTE	8p.; In: "Relating in a Global Community." Proceedings of the International Conference on Counseling in the 21st Century (7th, Sydney, Australia, December 29-31, 1998); see CG 029 933.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Child Caregivers; *Child Development; Children; Cognitive Psychology; *Concept Formation; Foreign Countries; Learning Activities; Parents
IDENTIFIERS	Indonesia; Israel; Singapore

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the conceptual and activity focus of a training program for parents and childcare providers to help children develop their learning potential. The program thereby facilitates children's integration into society and enhancement of further learning propensities needed by them to adapt. The focus of the work is to create conditions for the enhancement of learning potential for all individuals, and is directed toward helping parents maximize the developmental interactions that are part of the typical and available life space they experience. It addresses the child with special needs for whom impairments of development caused by a wide variety of conditions require specially designed and implemented interventions to overcome barriers to development. The training model has been presented several times, in a variety of cultures (United States, Singapore, Indonesia); evaluation feedback indicates the efficacy of the model. The model explains that systematic, controlled research has not yet been done. (JDM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 439 384

USING MEDIATED LEARNING EXPERIENCE PARAMETERS TO CHANGE CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR: TECHNIQUES FOR PARENTS AND CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

Louis H. Falik, Ph.D.

Dr. Falik is Professor of Counseling at San Francisco State University and Training and Research Associate at the International Center for the Enhancement of Learning Potential in Jerusalem, Israel. He integrates the theoretical and applicational work of Professor Reuven Feuerstein's theories of cognitive modifiability into counselor education, and trains teachers, psychologists, childcare providers, and parents throughout the world in the applications of the theory to learning enhancement and behavioral change. One such application is described in this paper.

Introduction

Our world requires that individuals be adaptive, responsive, and amenable to learning both tasks and processes which are almost unimaginable as we project from this point in time into the future. The goal of parents, teachers, and childcare providers is to find ways to help children develop their learning potential, thereby facilitating both integration into society and enhancement of further learning propensities--needed by them to adapt, and by the society for its advancement and perpetuation. Israeli Professor Reuven Feuerstein's theory of structural cognitive modifiability (SCM), and its applied constructs of mediated learning experience (MLE) serves to frame potential interventions in this area of concern.

There are two foci for this work: (1) creating conditions for the enhancement of learning potential for all individuals, as part of the normal parent/child interaction, and directed toward helping parents maximize the developmental interactions that are part of the typical and available life space they experience; and (2) addressing the child with special needs, for whom impairments of development caused by a wide variety of conditions require specially designed and implemented interventions to overcome barriers to development. With regard to the first focus, one needs a belief system that accepts and searches for conditions of modifiability, and activates behaviors and functions to realize them. In the second focus, the more stressing and interfering conditions caused by "distal" etiological factors require that we identify specific impediments, develop strategies to overcome them, use the strategies in a systematic manner, and actively direct our "proximal" efforts to create modifiability (where it is difficult to envision, or has been predicted not to exist). SCM gives us the optimism and directionality to pursue these efforts, and shows us how to achieve changes through systematic, organized, and focused activities. Moreover, such actions are not limited to the "professionals," but must be mounted by all of the significant, intentioned adults in the life of the child.

This work shows that such efforts are both needed and possible, and that from theory one can develop practices, which can be understood, taught, utilized and monitored, and which become the basis for an optimistic, active response to the developmental and special needs of children. What follows is a brief description of the conceptual and activity focus of a training program for

CG 029965

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

W. Evraiff

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

parents and childcare providers (who will both work directly with children and consult with parents as they interact with their children).

Relating MLE to the Development of Cognitive Functions and Social Learning

Developing a belief system that supports the use of MLE is essential to its efficient application. As individuals consider elements of modifiability and mediation, it is necessary to identify and demonstrate a number of points that will later become manifest in observations of child behavior and activities which can be undertaken. The following are emphasized:

1. Intelligence is not a fixed "thing" which determines whether a child will learn, think, problem-solve, etc. All levels and ranges of ability are able to learn, given proper conditions.

2. Thinking, learning, and problem-solving require cognitive functions, which are acquired through experience, and can be observed, modified through intervention.

3. Cognitive learning occurs under two conditions: direct exposure to stimuli and experiences, and mediated learning experience (MLE). Both are essential to human learning and development.

4. MLE is necessary for all human learning. The amount, quality, intensity, frequency, and duration will vary as a function of the individual differences in children (the "distal" factors).

5. When MLE is insufficient or unavailable, the result is inadequate cognitive development, with limited academic and social learning. When MLE is adequate, prior limitations can be overcome and higher levels of cognitive and social development will be achieved.

6. Providing MLE is the essential role of parents, grandparents, older siblings, as part of the intergenerational transfer of culture. Effective cultures provide many instances of mediation, dysfunctional societies do not.

7. When cognitive development has not been sufficient, it is possible to apply MLE at later stages through specially constructed and applied interactions (parenting, teaching, counseling).

8. MLE can be learned and used by a wide variety of intentioned and concerned providers. These processes constitute an identifiable and important style of interaction--mediational parenting and teaching.

Operational Definitions of SCM and MLE: What Parents and Childcare Providers Need to Know

The theory of SCM is complex, but lends itself to clear functional explication. The presence of cognitive structures (patterns of what has been learned and retained) can be easily described and

illustrated. There are three major characteristics that must be conveyed and understood (Feuerstein, in press):

(1) Children are changed by changing cognitive structures, and each time a certain part of the child's behavior changes so too will the total "universe" of behaviors to which the part belongs;

(2) there is a "transformability" in the changes, observed in the rhythm, rapidity, amplitude--the qualities of the behavioral response--and amenable to focus and guided attention as changes in one area will affect more and more general areas, which are the "processes" of the behavior; and

(3) once changes have occurred, a "self-perpetuation" is generated where the individual (and the mediator) experiences a dynamic of continued modification, an active process of continued changes, as Feuerstein has described it, "projecting into the future the acquired changes."

Each of these characteristics can be identified in the behavior of children, and aspects of stimulating or eliciting behaviors to mediate them can be hypothesized. As described below, simple activities to observe or generate them can be devised and practiced.

Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) represents a theoretical and operational formulation of the interactions that can occur to facilitate cognitive and social learning. It is identified according to a number of "parameters" which guide the initiation and development of responses by the "mediator," who is animated and intentioned to focus, select, intensify, direct, and monitor the child's direct experience with the world. The overall goal of mediation is to heighten awareness, cause relationships to be observed and understood, to increase anticipation and further responsiveness, and the like. Through this process the "mediatee"s cognitive structure is affected. Feuerstein (1980) points out that "the (child, client, etc.) acquires behavior patterns and learning sets, which in turn become important ingredients of (his/her) capacity to become modified through direct exposure to stimuli" (p. 16).

MLE parameters can be organized into three clusters, and operationally described to identify criterial elements for both cognitive development and social/behavioral manifestations (Feuerstein and Feuerstein, 1991; Falik, 1996; Skuy, Mentis and Mentis, 1996). The mediator must learn to observe and identify both opportunities to provide mediation in all of these areas, where relevant, and to develop intervention strategies which are appropriately mediational. The parameters are:

* **Universal Criteria:** present in all interpersonal interactions, and necessary to create the conditions for general development, comfort, extended and elaborated learning.

Intentionality and reciprocity: conveys a purposeful and directed interaction, with attention and activity focused on the purpose of the encounter, and containing focused attention and clear communication and direction.

Transcendence: bridges the immediate encounter to broader issues of experience and future meaning, identifying rules and recurring themes, directing the "here and now to anticipated future experience.
Mediation of Meaning: infuses the encounter with the importance and relevance of feelings and activities, identifying and confirming values, acceptance/validation of feelings and reasons for the interaction.

* **Situational or Phase Specific Criteria**: related to specific situations or tasks which present opportunities for mediational interventions, but which cannot occur without the establishment of the mediational conditions identified above.

Mediation of regulation and control of behavior: experiencing and modifying environments to provide self-monitoring, making adjustments in responses or perspectives, developing skills through active structuring, developing insight into needs, skills, past and future experiences.
Mediation of feelings of competence: confirming (at a feeling level) abilities and skills, creating an optimistic belief in success, empowering confidence, task accomplishment, self reflections on abilities and achievements.
Mediation of sharing behavior: involving another individual in activities of cooperation and empathy, using listening and doing activities, openness and acceptance, and looking for the relevance of shared experiences.
Mediation of individuation and psychological differentiation: emphasizing the uniqueness and accepting the differences in the individual, valuing independence and diversity of behavior and reactions.
Mediation of goal seeking/goal setting/goal achieving/goal monitoring: encouraging the seeking of realistic goals, setting meaningful and achievable goals, planning their achievement, and monitoring their achievement.
Mediation of challenge, novelty and complexity: confronting novel, complex, difficult experiences with an optimistic approach to the real or perceived difficulty, structuring activities for positive outcomes by developing skills and supportive attitudes.

* **Integrative Orienting Belief System Criteria:** necessary to integrate changes in functioning into cognitive structures for sustained behavioral change and self-perpetuation.

Mediation of an awareness of the human being as a changing entity: encourages the perspective of the possibility of self-change, with expectations of potential for growth and acceptance of changes already or to be experienced.
Mediation of the search for optimistic alternatives: facilitates awareness of potential for change and available opportunities in the range of available experiences, encourages the scanning of immediate experience and considering past experiences in light of their growth and change potentials.
Mediation of a feeling of belonging: confirming the connections at social and emotional levels between the individual and the world around him/her, validating the importance of relating to others, going outside the boundaries of self.

Applying the Theory and Concepts to Behavioral Change: Objectives and Structure of a Training Program

A training workshop contains the following components, presented in the following order, comprising a conceptual and an experiential aspects. That is, understanding the concepts and processes is deemed essential to insightful and creative use of activities, and the understanding and use of already available resources. Our "cognitive" approach requires that we make the specific activities cognitive for the participants, so that the bridges and direction that ensues will be relevant and systematic (the mediation principles of meaning and transcendence). A typical workshop format requires 12 clock hours, divided into presentations of material, group discussions, practice exercises, and review and sharing of what has been learned.

I. Introduction to the theory and concepts of cognitive modifiability and mediated learning experience: what is modifiability and where have you seen it; identification of direct and mediated learning experience; when and where have you been a mediator; what makes interventions and reactions to children mediational; how do we know when a behavior that is acquired has been incorporated into the structural repertoire of the child?

II. Identification of cognitive functions: what do they look like; what is learned and why is it important; differentiating normal developmental tasks and the conditions that engender them; discerning deficient and fragile functions; describing functions in relevant modalities and venues (academic, social/peer group interactions, family interactions, neighborhood and community).

III. Establishing the value system and goal expectations for the parent as mediator: values and beliefs of parents; functional and dysfunctional parenting interactions; observing and assessing behavior; identifying desired outcomes from mediational intervention.

IV. Developing skills as a mediator: identifying activities and situations of mediational potential ("naturalistic" and specially constructed); developing verbal and behavioral skills that mediate behavior; focusing mediational interventions on the child to achieve specific outcomes; developing, planning, and monitoring mediational activities; evaluating the effectiveness of mediation, modification of mediational activities.

In order to achieve the above objectives, a series of materials are created, resources identified, and learning activities planned. These will vary according to the composition of the participants, and external structure of the workshop (number of sessions, proportion of parents to childcare provider professionals, etc.).

(1) The creation of a workbook of teaching materials to help participants understand the concepts and processes of cognitive modifiability and MLE. Wherever possible, schematic representation of the concepts is provided. These materials are used to guide discussions, link to examples and illustrations, and integrate the participant's understanding.

(2) An activity handbook containing a variety of worksheets relating to all aspects of the process of mediation: values identification and clarification; identification of needs and focus, observation of behavior, planning and monitoring activities, evaluation of effectiveness.

(3) Group process activities that give participants experience with various aspects of the mediational process. For example (but not limited to these):

(a) participants are asked to identify situations and events where they either witnessed or engaged in effective or ineffective mediation (can be in either individual recollection or in small process groups);

(b) choosing a particular child and describing basic functioning according to the development of cognitive functions, and linking potential interventions to them in relevant performance areas (again, as an individual project or collaboratively in small process groups);

(c) after selecting a target child/behavior, identify specific mediational objectives and plan activities which are proposed to achieve changes according to the dimensions of the MLE parameter;

(d) brainstorm activities which generally fit into MLE parameters;

(e) study already prepared activities (such as are available in several prepared mediational programs--c.f., Jensen and Jensen, *Parent as Mediator Program*; Lidz, *Let's Think About It)* from the perspectives of their mediational potential, feasibility for the situation of the participant, and adaptations to specific or individualized situations or needs of the child. With regard to the above mentioned programs, they provide activity workbooks and training suggestions which can provide "stand alone" experiences. It is our concern that an overall focus on MLE and cognitive modifiability should be provided as a cornerstone aspect of training if the activity focus does not become rote, automated, and without the lasting and meaningful structural change that the MLE approach emphasizes.

A Brief Review of Applications and Outcomes

The above described training model has been presented several times, in a variety of cultures (United States, Singapore, Indonesia), and a number of times to international groups in a varied format in Israel. It is usually followed up with focused individual consultation, to better identify particular children and parental concerns, and offer advice and coaching on specific interventions. Evaluation feedback, both in written and verbal formats, indicate the efficacy of the model, and have suggested various modifications which have been incorporated over the three years of its use. Systematic, controlled research has not yet been done.

References

Falik, L. H. (1996) Mediated learning experience and the counseling process: an integrative model. *College of Education Review* (San Francisco State University), 8, 76-84.

Feuerstein, R. (1980) *Instrumental Enrichment.* Baltimore, Md.; University Park Press.

Feuerstein, R. (in press) *Early detection: blessing or curse.* Proceedings of Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental and Learning Disorders. Washington, D.C.

Feuerstein, R. and Feuerstein, S. (1991) Mediated learning theory: a theoretical review. In R. Feuerstein, P.S. Klein, and A. J. Tannenbaum (eds), *Mediated learning experience: theoretical, psychosocial, and learning implications.* London: Freund.

Skuy, M., Mentis, M., and Mentis, M. (1996) *Mediated learning in and out of the classroom.* Arlington Heights, Il.: Skylight.